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Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

Summary record of the 338th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 15 December 2011, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Diallo ..... (Senegal)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

1. *The agenda was adopted*

Update on developments since the previous meeting of the Committee

2. **The Chairman** said that since the previous meeting of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Robert Serry, had given a briefing before the Security Council, in which he had stressed the need for urgent political progress between Israel and the Palestinians through renewed negotiations in a conducive environment. He had said that without a credible political path forward, accompanied by more far-reaching steps on the ground, the viability of the Palestinian Authority and the two-State solution itself could not be taken for granted.

3. Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal had met in Cairo on 24 November to advance reconciliation between the two major Palestinian factions. They had agreed to prepare for general elections to be held in May 2012.

4. On 29 November, the international community had observed the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. The Committee had held a special meeting in New York, and similar meetings had been held in Geneva and Vienna.

5. On 30 November, the Israeli cabinet had taken a decision to release 100 million dollars in Palestinian tax revenues that had been illegally withheld since October. On the same day, the General Assembly had concluded its debate on the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East and adopted the resolutions submitted by the Committee renewing the mandates of the Committee, the Division for Palestinian Rights and the Department of Public Information, as well as the main political resolution on the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine.

6. On 8 December, an Israeli air strike near a crowded park in downtown Gaza City had killed two suspected members of an armed Palestinian group, triggering renewed rocket and mortar fire from Gaza into Israel. In subsequent Israeli air strikes, a father and his twelve-year-old son had been killed, and many other civilians, including children, had been wounded.

7. On 13 December, the Palestinian flag had been hoisted for the first time above the headquarters of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Paris, as the Palestinian anthem played and President Abbas looked on. On the same day, a coalition of 20 international human rights and aid organizations had reported that Israeli demolition of homes in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem had displaced more than 1,000 Palestinians in 2011, or twice as many as in 2010. Since the beginning of the year, more than 500 Palestinian homes, wells, rainwater cisterns and other essential structures had been destroyed in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

8. Since the Committee's previous meeting on 18 November, the Israeli authorities had continued to approve new houses and homes in settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. They had approved 100 homes in the West Bank settlement of Shilo, 41 permanent houses in Efrat near Bethlehem and a new Jewish enclave consisting of 14 homes in a Palestinian neighbourhood in East Jerusalem. The municipal authorities of Jerusalem had announced plans to declare an area at Mount Scopus a national park, thereby blocking the development of Palestinian neighbourhoods in East Jerusalem. There were incidents of settler violence in the West Bank and East Jerusalem almost every day, many leading to serious confrontations with the Palestinian inhabitants.

The situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and developments in the political process

9. **Ms. Seward** (Strategic Communications Division, Department of Public Information) said that the highlight of the 2011 observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People had been the launch of the new version of the United Nations exhibit on the question of Palestine. The revised exhibit included updated information and new graphic elements, as well as an accompanying video and a timeline on the question of Palestine and the role of the United Nations in addressing the issue. The exhibit was on the third floor of the General Assembly building. A reproduction of the exhibit in French had been unveiled at the Palais des Nations in Geneva one day before the International Day of

Solidarity. United Nations information centres around the world had had the exhibit translated into many different languages, using funds provided by the Committee.

10. Commemorative events had included: an exhibit, produced in collaboration with the representative of Palestine to Indonesia and the Faculty of Law at Atma Jaya Catholic University; in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, a recitation by a local poet of renown expressing solidarity with the Palestinian people; an event at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations with the participation of representatives of the Russian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Embassy of Palestine and ambassadors of African and Asian States; and in Pretoria, South Africa, a panel discussion and a reproduction of the exhibit, with 150 representatives of Government, civil society and academia in attendance.

11. **Mr Mansour** (Observer for Palestine) said that following the historic speech of President Abbas in the General Assembly and in the light of efforts towards full membership in the United Nations, the International Day of Solidarity had been a particularly festive occasion. In the words of President Abbas, the raising of the Palestinian flag before the UNESCO building in Paris had been a historic and moving event, marking the first time the Palestinian flag had been flown in front of a United Nations building.

12. Crimes committed by the Israelis against the Palestinians were documented on a weekly basis. As a result of the admission of Palestine to membership of UNESCO, Israel had unleashed a series of punitive, collective actions against Palestinians, including acceleration and intensification of its illegal settlement activities. Five letters had been sent to the Security Council documenting those illegal activities, which had been carried out tin violation of international law and Israel's obligations under the road map. The letters were official documents of the United Nations containing all the details of crimes committed in occupied East Jerusalem, the occupied West Bank and the occupied Gaza Strip, including the number of civilians killed and the continuing, illegal and inhumane blockade of the Gaza Strip. The international community had demanded that the blockade be lifted to permit reconstruction following the devastation resulting from the aggression against the Palestinians three years earlier.

13. Consultations with the President and members of the Security Council and with the non-aligned caucus in the Council had begun in the last few days with a view to encouraging the Council to shoulder its responsibility and pressure Israel to cease its provocative illegal escalation in all areas, including illegal settlement activities. The Security Council should muster the political will to act in accordance with its obligations under the Charter of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security. Perhaps by the next monthly session on the situation in the Middle East and the Occupied Palestinian Territory the following week, the Security Council would be in a position to react appropriately and put a halt to Israel's continuing crimes, in accordance with its Charter obligation to maintain international peace and security.

14. Despite 50 days of deliberations, the Committee on the Admission of New Members had not reached a consensus on the Palestinian application for full membership in the United Nations. While a clear majority supported admission, one member of the Committee was openly opposed and a number of others supported the thrust of the application but had questions about the timing.

15. The next steps to be taken, such as joining other United Nations bodies and adhering to conventions and instruments of international law, were being considered. President Abbas had been in Paris, Brussels and London for consultations on next steps, and would be visiting other capitals in Europe and elsewhere as part of that process.

16. The Quartet had just issued a statement calling upon both parties to the Middle East conflict to refrain from provocations. For the Palestinian side, that statement referred only to actions by Israel, as the Palestinians were not involved in any provocations. While Israel was engaged in building illegal settlements and killing civilians in the Gaza Strip, the Palestinian Authority had applied to join UNESCO based on its legal and historic right to do so. Its application had been overwhelmingly supported by the member States. The Quartet had solicited proposals on border issues and security from both sides. The Palestinian Authority had submitted proposals, while Israel had yet to do so.

Request by Saudi Arabia to become an observer

17. **The Chairman** said that in a letter dated 9 December 2011, addressed to the Chairman of the Committee, the Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia had expressed his country's desire to become an observer in the Committee. If he heard no objection, he

would take it that the Committee wished to approve the request of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to become an observer in the Committee.

18. *It was so decided.*

19. **Mr. Oyaidi** (Observer for Saudi Arabia) thanked the Committee for accepting his country's request to become an observer in the Committee.

20. Since the establishment of the Committee in 1975, his delegation had followed its efforts to defend the legitimate rights of the Palestinians and especially their right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital, in implementation of the relevant resolutions. The intransigence of the occupying force, failure to implement United Nations resolutions, especially Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the decision of the occupying force to continue ignoring international denunciation for preventing the Palestinians from exercising their basic rights made the participation of countries and people and expressions of solidarity with the Palestinian people even more important. The situation had negative repercussions not only on the people, but also on the region of the Middle East in general.

21. His country's objective in becoming an observer was to continue supporting the work of the Committee to achieve a just peace based on the rules of international law. The work of the Committee was to be commended and should continue until the Palestinian people was able to exercise all of its inalienable natural and legitimate rights, including the right to return within the limits of the Palestinian State as recommended by the United Nations on the basis of 1967 borders.

22. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for Palestine) congratulated Saudi Arabia for joining the Committee as an observer. Its presence would enrich the work of the Committee.

United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People, to be held in Cairo on 6 and 7 February 2012

23. **The Chairman** said that the provisional programme of the United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People was contained in working paper No. 7, which had been distributed by the Secretariat. The theme of the Seminar would be the economic cost of continued Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territory, and local, regional and international efforts towards mitigating it.

24. In organizing the annual event, the Committee wished to draw attention to the fact that the Israeli occupation was the primary obstacle to socio-economic development in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Experts at the Seminar would assess the cost of the occupation and its impact on the socio-economic situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. It would highlight the efforts of the Palestinian Authority, supported by the international community, to prepare for independence, sovereignty and sustainable development.

25. Invitations to the Seminar would be sent to internationally renowned experts on the issue, States Members of the United Nations, observers at the United Nations, parliamentarians, representatives of organizations in the United Nations system and of other intergovernmental organizations, representatives of civil society and members of the media.

26. **Mr. Aljowaily** (Egypt) said that Egypt was pleased to host the Seminar in Cairo in February, 2012. Preparations were under way to facilitate the successful holding of the Seminar. The Egyptian delegation in New York stood ready to engage in all preparations and work with the Secretariat of the United Nations under the auspices of the Chairman of the Committee.

27. **The Chairman** said that if there were no objections, he would take it that the Committee wished to approve the provisional programme for the Seminar contained in working paper No. 7.

28. *It was so decided.*

Other matters

29. **The Chairman** said that the Division for Palestinian Rights would host a briefing by the Norwegian Refugee Council on legal issues related to housing, land and property in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. It would be held in mid-January and would focus on such issues as the Israeli legal system, restrictive zoning and planning, settlements, the application of international law and challenges in the legal system.

The meeting rose at 4 p.m.